

A silhouette of a city skyline with several skyscrapers and a bridge, set against a light blue background.

2023

RHODES COLLEGE  
**SUMMER SERVICE**  
FELLOWSHIP





# VOICES OF SERVICE

Reflections on the 2023 Rhodes Summer Service Fellowship

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“This is what is true—no matter where we come from or what we believe in, we can serve. And when we serve, we do more than solve problems—we promote and experience the richness and dignity of human lives.”

—Sally Jones Heinz '81  
MIFA, President and CEO



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For information about the Summer Service Fellowship program, contact [careers@rhodes.edu](mailto:careers@rhodes.edu).



## Abena Afriyie

Class of 2026

**Major:** Politics and Law

**Hometown:** Charlottesville, VA

### ROOM IN THE INN

This summer, I served at RITI (Room in the Inn) Memphis as Assistant Director for CITI (Children in the Inn) Camp. Room in the Inn is a shelter for families experiencing homelessness and a recuperative care center for individuals recently released from Shelby County Hospitals with nowhere to go. On average, guests of the Family Inn stay for around thirty days, while recuperative care guests stay until they are fully recovered.

Established in 2007, CITI Camp is an annual summer day camp that provides a safe environment for children to develop social skills and improve literacy skills. This summer, our

camp has four components: field trips, community partners, weekly themes, and a literacy curriculum. As assistant director, I help execute the director's vision, expectations, and curriculum while utilizing appropriate behavior management techniques to promote healthy social and emotional development over time. To accomplish this, I bond with the campers by listening, playing, reading, and crafting with them. Because all of our campers' families are experiencing homelessness or housing transition, their families struggle with limited resources. Nearly all campers have adverse behaviors and severe trauma, and working with them requires a significant emotional capacity and great empathy.

This summer, I've learned about myself, the professional world, and the demands of working with children. Responsibilities such as conferencing with parents, directing rotating volunteer groups, utilizing reinforcement and reward systems to promote healthy behavior, setting expectations, coordinating with other staff members about Department of Child Services cases, and learning to delegate have helped me grow exponentially. I've thoroughly enjoyed growing in my leadership as I become more well-rounded, resilient, and adaptable.



## Lily Broadway

Class of 2025

**Major:** English

**Hometown:** Paragould, AR

### NEW BALLET ENSEMBLE AND SCHOOL

This summer I have been working at New Ballet Ensemble and School. New Ballet is a non-profit focused on providing a professional level of dance training regardless of the ability to pay. While the school offers many different levels of ballet, they notably include classes for hip hop and African dance as well, which provides several creative outlets for students to explore. They offer several scholarships and do outreach programming to underserved schools in the Memphis Community that don't have access to well-funded arts departments. I have mainly been focused on planning the summer curriculums for NBE's annual outreach summer camps. These camps focus on building dance training, language arts skills, confidence,

and cultural appreciation for students. Alongside implementing a structured curriculum to the program, I have in addition had the opportunity to observe the financial responsibility and transportation development of New Ballet. While gaining a broader understanding of scholarship access and allocating funds to students, I have also witnessed the purchase of a van to transport students to and from New Ballet, which has given me a better insight into how significant transportation is to giving students an equitable educational experience.

Dance was such a significant portion of my childhood, as it taught me structure, expression, perseverance, and above all, passion. Helping others seize the opportunity to learn (beyond just how to plier on the barre) what dance can provide has been an extremely rewarding experience.



## Kate Buikema

Class of 2025

**Major:** English

**Hometown:** Westmont, IL

### JUST CITY

Just City is a criminal justice reform organization that works to create a legal system in which everyone is not just in theory, but in practice, equal under the law. Instead of providing individual legal services, Just City endeavors to transform the root causes of injustice in the system. They do this work primarily through their three core programs—the Memphis Community Bail Fund, the Clean Slate Fund, and the Court Watch Program—but also through targeted litigation, community education, advocacy, and much, much more.

I had the opportunity to be involved in nearly all of these efforts, and I learned so much through those experiences and from the people who run those programs. For instance, I worked alongside the Clean Slate Fund program manager to comb through their endless data sets of people who might qualify to have their records expunged, or at least have their court costs waived. I went to the Shelby County Criminal Courthouse several times to watch trials and take notes on judge conduct and cases that needed our attention. I spent a lot of time helping with the behind-the-scenes work of development, helping with fundraising through data collection and donor engagement. Out of all the things I was involved in, though, the most interesting part of my job was when I got to read the letters Just City received from the incarcerated, pleading for someone to pay attention to their case. What I found as I read and shared these stories with the staff was that there was no letter, no case that wasn't worth paying attention to. And more than any individual program, I was amazed by how much the Just City staff cared—about their work, about each individual story, and about constantly learning, adapting, and paying attention to what's happening to those in the justice system in Memphis and beyond.



## Kate Christie

Class of 2024

**Major:** Neuroscience

**Hometown:** Overland Park, KS

### CHURCH HEALTH

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work with Church Health. Church Health is a Memphis-based nonprofit that works to provide equal access to healthcare for those who are uninsured or underinsured. Church Health's model for whole-person care is one of its distinguishing features. They concentrate not only on the medical aspects of illnesses, but also on how friends and family, movement, nutrition, work, faith, and emotions affect a patient's symptoms. I worked in the eye clinic as an optometry intern, where I learned a variety of skills ranging from technical, such as taking retinal images on various machines, to

administrative, such as calling to schedule and confirm appointments. My main focus this summer, however, was on diabetic patients. High blood pressure caused by uncontrolled diabetes can impair vision if blood leaks from the vessels in the eye and blocks the fovea. This is why our clinic works hard to get as many diabetic patients as possible in for annual eye exams to ensure the health of their eyes for the long term. I frequently worked downstairs in the medical clinic, taking retinal images of diabetic patients and then calling them later to schedule a full eye exam.

This work taught me the value of communication within an organization and how to effectively express the importance of certain medical exams, even when patients state they have no concerns. I am so grateful for the numerous valuable experiences I have gained this summer, and I know that no matter what field I pursue after graduation, the skills I have gained will be unmatched.



## Anamaree Dranes

Class of 2024

**Major:** Educational Studies and English

**Hometown:** Mt. Juliet, TN

### ARKWINGS

This summer, I've been working as an intern for the Arkwings Foundation located in Frayser. Arkwings' mission is to promote arts and wellness through nature. Walking into the building you can see the fruition of this goal: kids playing in the garden, artists working dutifully upstairs, and residents of the community perusing the galleries inside.

My time at Arkwings has solidified my position as an intern, artist, and Memphian. Working in the community with other artists has introduced me to the possibilities of my own talents, which have been nurtured by Arkwings. I have been able to create new programming around

textile arts, which will benefit myself, other artists, and anyone who wants to learn! Beyond this, the skills I've garnered through communications efforts and educational events will aid me in my career and beyond.

Overall, Arkwings and the Summer Service Fellowship have given me an invaluable opportunity to expand my knowledge of practical items, as well as of Memphis and its many, many helpful and kind residents. I hope to continue my work at Arkwings and in keeping Memphis beautiful.



## Shea Goodson

Class of 2024

**Major:** Health Equity

**Hometown:** Tulsa, OK

### MEMPHIS ROX

Memphis Rox is a community-based climbing gym located in the historically underserved neighborhood of South Memphis. Memphis Rox operates on a pay-what-you-can scale in order to be accessible to every individual regardless of ability to pay. Acting as more than just a climbing gym, Memphis Rox also holds additional community programs including but not limited to free after-school care, free lunches, a community garden, and a community store. Memphis Rox is also able to provide support to vulnerable members of the community by creating a welcoming environment.

As a Health Equity major, I am interested in a holistic approach to health care. Combining community services with fitness is, in my opinion, an excellent way to improve multiple aspects of health. My time working at Memphis Rox has shown me how the organization goes above and beyond in regard to providing holistic services to their community. At Memphis Rox, I was able to engage with the community, which is one of the aspects of the Summer Service Fellowship that I valued greatly. Personal relationships with the community you serve are one of the most invaluable aspects of service as they foster trust. I gained a better understanding of what it really means to serve and how my individual influence is only as impactful as I want it to be.



## Jasmine Jeffries

Class of 2026

**Major:** Art and Art History

**Hometown:** Memphis, TN

### GERMANTOWN COMMUNITY THEATER

This summer, I was able to work at Germantown Community Theater (GCT). GCT is a nonprofit theater in the heart of Germantown. There are 8–10 plays and musicals in its main season, along with a variety of classes and workshops, concerts, and camps for all ages. I worked in the department of youth education and community outreach, where I participated in the K–8 summer camps as a counselor, helped plan the theater's fall classes, and served as an assistant director on the annual youth summer musical.

I have been a part of the GCT family ever since I was in high school; however, this is my first time working with them instead of performing in their shows. My time here this summer has been absolutely incredible. I have been in theater and the arts all my life, and I personally can attest to how important it is for young people to have a source of fulfillment beyond academics. I have met over a hundred children and teens this summer, and being able to give them that opportunity has been irreplaceable. My time here at Germantown Community Theater has given me not only the practical knowledge of how a nonprofit arts organization operates on a day-to-day basis, but also firm assurance that the career I plan to pursue has meaningful impact on the community.



## Hannah Magann

Class of 2025

**Major:** Political Science

**Hometown:** Little Rock, AR

### CHURCH HEALTH

I spent my summer working at Church Health, a nonprofit that provides more affordable medical services to Memphis residents. Church Health primarily caters to underinsured individuals, providing healthcare for the largely overlooked working class. The founder, Dr. Scott Morris, visited Memphis and saw how so many Memphians could not access healthcare. Church Health started small, first established in a house and seeing only 12 patients regularly, but has now been around for about 30 years and sees over 60,000 patients a year. They currently offer a vast range of services such as behavioral health, physical therapy, dental, child care, medical, and optometry.

From working here this past summer, I have noticed how determined the organization is to increase its sphere of influence. Not only do they want to develop in Memphis, but they're working to inspire other cities similar to Memphis to help change health care across the nation. My role was in the optometry clinic, where I was assigned tasks such as patient screening and administrative work. I would take images of patients' eyes before they were seen by a doctor. I was often assigned to confirm or reschedule appointments, which helped me with my communication skills. Besides these tasks, I worked very closely with our diabetic patients. I have learned how crucial it is to monitor your eye health if you are diagnosed with diabetes. Frequently I was updating lists of patients who had not been seen in the past year and explaining to them the importance of yearly eye checkups. Church Health prioritizes preventative care with their patients, and I am so grateful to have played a small part in providing that.

The Summer Service Fellowship allowed me to get to know Memphis on a more personal level. I have continuously been impressed by the strong presence of the local nonprofits. Being able to learn about the other fellows' sites while exploring my own has been a fulfilling experience. I plan to continue working with nonprofits in the future and carry the values I learned from Summer Service wherever I go.





## Dylan Morris

Class of 2025  
**Major:** Environmental Science  
**Hometown:** Clarksville, TN

### SHELBY FARMS PARK CONSERVANCY

This summer I worked as an intern for the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy (SFPC). SFPC is a nonprofit organization established in 2007 with the goal of “managing, operating, restoring and improving Shelby Farms Park in partnership with and for the public.” The park is approximately 4,500 acres, making it one of the largest urban parks in the country, so it requires an attentive and receptive conservancy to ensure the beauty and adequate utilization of the space. The mission of the park conservancy is to inform the public of what services are available within the park to encourage the local community to take ownership over the space and develop the park to its full potential.

Access to greenspace and conservation have been identified as important factors for maintaining a healthy urban environment by helping citizens better cope with stress in their daily lives and have a healthy ecosystem to live in. My area of responsibility was to help Shelby Farms provide equitable access to the space as well as maintain the Park’s pristine look. I helped raise funds for the conservancy since nearly 75% of the five-million-dollar budget is supported through donations and park rentals. As a member of the development team at the conservancy, I conducted onsite interviews with park guests, asking them what can be improved in the park and how the park can do a better job creating programs that are for all of Memphis.

My experience with SFPC was incredible. I was able to interact with all the different facets of the organization and be a part of an extremely important marketing project. The Summer Service Fellowship allowed me an opportunity to be more involved in Memphis and its rich culture, while also providing me an opportunity for meaningful nonprofit work experience. As a result, it has changed my perspectives on what nonprofit work and service can mean.



## Lily Resha

Class of 2025  
**Major:** International Studies and Spanish  
**Hometown:** Murfreesboro, TN

### JUST CITY

This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Just City. The mission of Just City is to encourage meaningful criminal justice reforms in Shelby County that ensure that neither race, ethnicity, nor income affect anyone who encounters the criminal legal system. My role this summer has primarily been working with the court watch program. The court watch program at Just City aims to encourage transparency, accountability, and community participation in the work of criminal justice reform by training volunteers to observe court proceedings. Through this program I have gained invaluable experience with the criminal justice system and how it impacts our community.

Visiting the Criminal Justice Center at 201 Poplar Ave. almost every day this summer opened my eyes to the countless instances of injustice that happen on a regular basis to folks who are marginalized by our criminal justice system. Further, the Summer Service Fellowship learning experiences every week gave me more insight on how criminal justice is connected to poverty, transportation, healthcare, and education inequities in our city. This experience has allowed me to learn and grow tremendously in ways that will benefit me not only in my future career but also in how I interact with the world around me. The number one thing my work with Just City has taught me that I will carry in my pursuit of a legal career is that the law cannot effectively be practiced without an understanding of how the legal system interacts with every member of our community.



## Soren Sijapati

Class of 2024  
**Major:** International Studies  
**Hometown:** Gettysburg, PA

### REP

This summer I am a fellow with the Refugee Empowerment Program (REP) of Memphis, a nonprofit that aims to empower, educate, and equip immigrant and refugee families. I am incredibly passionate about my work with REP, as I am working with the elementary program, which focuses on giving K–5 students engaging activities that help improve their math, reading, and language skills, as well as their creativity. I have absolutely loved my time with REP; it feels so rewarding to be working for such a great nonprofit, and I have made so many wonderful connections in my time with them.

The Rhodes Summer Service Fellowship has helped me feel closer to Memphis and has made me more aware of all the amazing things Memphis has to offer as a city, as well as the problems that the city faces. Additionally, I have learned about so many great nonprofits in the city, and I have become increasingly interested in pursuing nonprofit work after graduation. I fully intend to continue working with REP beyond this summer, as I have become so passionate about the work we have done this summer. I cannot thank and praise the Summer Service Fellowship and REP enough for giving me this life-changing fellowship.



## Jake Stewart

Class of 2025  
**Major:** Educational Studies and English  
**Hometown:** Kennett, MO

### REP

This summer I have been working with the elementary summer camp at Refugee Empowerment Program. REP offers support to refugees and their families in the Memphis area. Although this support is primarily educational in nature, they offer a wide array of resources. As an elementary assistant, I lead my group of students through the planned lessons for the day. As a result of being around the same students every day, we were able to form a relationship based on trust and understanding. I learned how to pick my battles and relate with my students, who really only want to spend their summer days playing outside. Through this relationship I felt I was able to create an educational and enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

My co-workers at REP come from a vast diversity of backgrounds. These backgrounds range from Memphis natives to those who have themselves undergone the refugee experience. Although I shared a space with them for only a few months, I have never met a more driven and passionate group of people. Because of REP’s small size, everyone on the staff wears many hats. A single person in this organization may act as teacher, interpreter, and driver all in one day. It is because of this flexibility that REP is able to meet the needs of the community at an instant. Among the things I am most grateful for in this experience, I was able to confirm that education is indeed the correct trajectory for my professional life.



## Isaac Vigoren

Class of 2025  
**Major:** Political Science  
**Hometown:** Denver, CO

### REP

I spent my summer as a Summer Service Fellow with Refugee Empowerment Program Memphis (REP). REP works directly with the refugee population of Memphis to ensure that vital needs are met. Many refugees arrive in the United States knowing little to no English. The government provides a meager three months of federal and state support before they expect refugees to be autonomous. REP gives extended help to this population, offering adult English classes, student education programs, a food pantry, and the services of cultural brokers fluent in multiple languages. These combined services help new Americans to assimilate effectively and allow their children to stay on pace academically and socially. As an intern,

I worked directly with elementary and middle/high school-age youth as a leader in REP's summer literacy program. Additionally, I reviewed internal data collection and management strategies to aid REP in its grant application process.

As a pre-law student, working with REP allowed me a greater understanding of the legal and bureaucratic systems that govern nonprofits. Working specifically on data collection and reporting methods introduced me to the practices of the state and federal levels. I could see how convoluted and difficult it truly is to create an organization that effectively combats poverty while complying with the complex requirements of grants. I have also gained faith because many genuinely good people are willing to put in work to help fight poverty in Memphis. The skills and relationships gained this summer will undoubtedly stay with me for the rest of my life.



## Brandon Washington

Class of 2026  
**Major:** Russian and International Studies  
**Hometown:** Memphis, TN

### YOUTH VILLAGES

This summer I had the pleasure of working with the development team at Youth Villages. Youth Villages is one of the largest foster care agencies in the nation. While they do help with foster care in most states, they also offer residential services for those youth that suffer from disabilities as a result of a traumatic situation. They offer these services in their foster homes, group homes, and residential campuses. I worked mostly under the Volunteer and Donor Engagement Coordinator, which meant I was able to help put on different volunteer events both on and off campus. This meant that I would help set up the events, such as putting out the popcorn for a Birthday Hero party we were having for three guys

who had birthdays in the month of July. While having a birthday party might seem boring for most youth, it is often actually the highlight of the week for these particular individuals. Being a part of so many happy moments has shown me the small but powerful impacts nonprofits have on everyday people.

Also, as somebody with lived experience in foster care, I have now learned so much more about the system's inner workings that many of our youth have to endure until they turn 18. It has allowed me to see how other sides of being in state's custody operate so that when I'm advocating for changes to the foster care system, I can also do the same for those living in group homes and on residential campuses. Overall, this experience has given me a new outlook on nonprofit work. Even though we don't immediately see the change, it is still there!



## Eva Wolfe

Class of 2026  
**Major:** Africana Studies and English  
**Hometown:** Houston, TX

### COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTER

This summer I worked as an intern at the Community Legal Center of Memphis. The CLC is a nonprofit law firm that provides a variety of services to low-income clients in Shelby County. There are two main programs through which the organization operates: the Civil Program and the Immigrant Justice Program.

The Immigrant Justice Program offers a wide variety of services to the immigrant community in the Memphis area, including family-based applications, humanitarian immigration relief, and representation in removal proceedings. I had the pleasure of working with the CLC's

stellar immigration attorneys on several asylum cases. Several of our clients were Afghan and Ukrainian, which gave me a unique insight into the horrors of displacement and the absolute necessity for organizations in the CLC to aid refugees in the navigation of the complex and initially intimidating US legal system.

The Civil Program covers landlord/tenant disputes, uncontested guardianships, divorces, contract disputes, adoptions, social security appeals, elder abuse cases, conservatorships, and probate matters. I was able to join the Civil attorneys in court, consultations, and meetings where I was exposed to the intricacies and challenges in each area of civil law. I was also able to work with them behind the scene, whether it be in more procedural matters like drafting documents and filing them with the court or through more intensive research. I also worked on a series of projects on the executive side of things. One of my projects included going through call data from the past year to see what types of clients and cases the organization was unable to take, the goal of which is to see in what area there is the most need for development and expansion. I was able to present my findings to the Board of Directors. I am incredibly grateful for my experience at the CLC and have a new appreciation for the work that nonprofits do in the Memphis community, and I look forward to continuing the community engagement work that I have started.



**Thank you to our student coordinator, Asya Bray  
We sincerely appreciate all of your help this summer!**



**Sandi George Tracy | Co-Director**  
**Director, Career Services**

As I reflect on the summer of 2023, I am reminded of the injustices of the city I call “home”. Were we able to solve all of the challenges that impact our community this summer? No. Did we make a difference? I would respond with a resounding, “YES!”.

Public transportation, access to health care and education, homelessness, and so many other social issues plague Memphis and holds us back from being the city that we should be. From an outsider’s perspective, Memphis may be seen as a city with more challenges than solutions. But Memphis is also a city of amazing people and organizations. Together, we talked with professionals from CHOICES, Church Health, MIFA, Hospitality Hub, New Ballet, and Youngblood Studios and so many others who are making Memphis better. Your work this summer has also made Memphis a better place. I hope that your SSF experience has challenged you and inspired you to look for ways to build a better Memphis.

I am truly honored to have had the opportunity to work with you this summer. I will miss our weekly meetings. Please stay in touch but more importantly, stay involved! You are talented beyond measure and the world needs you! I wish you much success as you continue on your journey.



**Scott Garner | Co-Director**  
**Assistant Professor, Ancient Mediterranean Studies**

Even after living in Memphis for several years now, I still feel that there is so much that I want to learn about this city and its individuals. Being part of the Summer Service Fellows program provides me with the wonderful experience of getting to know this city more intimately---not only in regard to the challenges it faces, but also (and especially!) in terms of the opportunity and potential it provides. Each year, our visits to wide-ranging sites throughout the city and the discussions that follow challenge me to think more deeply about Memphis in unexpected ways, and I feel deeply indebted to everyone connected to SSF for helping me personally to advance toward being a more integrated and productive Memphian.

All of you have worked diligently throughout the summer to make a positive impact upon this community and the individuals within it, and it is my sincere hope that as you reflect back on this experience, you will be able to see its impact on yourselves as well, and also the opportunities now available for you to continue making a difference in the world around you for years to come!



**Rachelle Brown | Co-Director**  
**Assistant Director, Career Services**

I am a proud Memphis native and after experiencing Memphis through Summer Service Fellowship, I have learned much more about the city. Summer Service Fellowship allowed me, the fellows, and the co-facilitators of the program to learn and experience how the city of Memphis is being reimaged by non-profit organizations. It has been exciting to see students navigate and respond to the complex issues that exist in Memphis, TN and apply it to their academic coursework, lived experiences, and career aspirations.

# SUMMER SERVICE FELLOWSHIP 2023

## Week 1: Orientation

Memphis Landmark Scavenger Hunt, Cupboard Restaurant

## Week 2: Transportation

MATA Odyssey

## Week 3: Health

Church Health, CHOICES

## Week 4: Sustainability

Shelby Farms Park, Agricenter

SSF Iron Chef Competition

## Week 5: Poverty and Homelessness

Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association, Hospitality Hub

## Week 6: Education

Summer Service Fellowship Education Panel

## Week 7: Art

New Ballet Ensemble, Youngblood Studios





- Abena Afriyie | Room In The Inn
- Lily Broadway | New Ballet Ensemble & School
- Kate Buikema & Lily Resha | Just City
- Kate Christie & Hannah Magann | Church Health
- Anamaree Dranes | Arkwings
- Shea Goodson | Memphis Rox
- Jasmine Jeffries | Germantown Community Theatre
- Dylan Morris | Shelby Farms Park
- Soren Sijapati & Jake Stewart & Isaac Vigoren | REP
- Brandon Washington | Youth Villages
- Eva Wolfe | Community Legal Center
- Asya Bray | Student Coordinator
- Sandi George Tracy & Scott Garner & Rachelle Brown | Co-Directors

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